

# **A**PPENDIX. A: LESSONS LEARNED

---

---

# Lessons Learned

---

---

## NOTES ON THE PROCESS AND EXPERIENCE USING THE PROCESS

The PlanWorks decision guide provided an easy to use framework that could be easily tailored to the planning needs of the I-64 corridor project. The decision geode was a rich resource of information with helpful resources and case studies organized around each step in the planning process. The PlanWorks methodology was especially useful in that it helped keep the project on track and provided a framework for bringing together a large coalition of stakeholders. Many of the PlanWorks resources were also useful when the process became bogged down. At these points project staff tuned to the assessment tools, policy questions and case studies to see how others had addressed similar issues.

## USE AS A CASE STUDY

The I-64 planning process can serve as a model for inter-agency planning and decision making. It is especially relevant to other smaller MPOs looking to start the discussion process around interstate corridor improvements and inter-jurisdictional cooperation. It can serve as a model for how starting discussions before there are acute problems can reduce future problems by addressing small issues early. The sections below document some of the lessons learned during the process.

### What worked?

Working with multiple stakeholders on a project can always present challenges in terms of communication and coordination. The MPO staff found that several best practices helped keep the project on track. These included:

#### Frequent communication

Frequent communication and coordination helped keep the project moving forward. The project leads at the MPOs were in frequent communication and set up specific check-in schedule between working group meetings. This allowed the project leaders to develop effective lines of communication and keep the project coordinated. Frequent

communication also allowed MPO staff to keep their boards and VDOT staff updated about the project. This type of communication between different MPOs was a key strength of the corridor project. To further maintain a high level of communication between the MPOs a corridor specific MOU was executed which formally states how corridor specific communication will continue.

#### Small project leadership team

Having a small project leadership team was a critical component of the structure of the Corridor Study. This allowed decisions to be made quickly and effectively. It also reduced communications backlogs and the potential for conflict within the project team.

#### Diverse stakeholder group

The small project team was coupled with a larger stakeholder group. This proved successful because the stakeholder model allowed a wide range of stakeholder to participate and provide their input into the corridor planning process. This model was successful because, each stakeholder meeting covered a separate topic and provided opportunities for the stakeholders to hear from subject matter experts. Structurally, providing the stakeholders with clear guidance at the beginning of the process reduced confusion and conflict later on in the planning process.

#### Coordination

Using a detailed project scope the project leadership team was able to effectively coordinate corridor planning related tasks and keep things moving forward. Developing a project specific scope of work through a collaborative process between the two MPOs allowed for a better understanding of roles and responsibilities.

#### Focusing on cost effective solutions

By focusing on cost-effective solutions that work to maintain the corridors assets and improve the deficiencies the leadership team found it easier to get buy-in from key stakeholders which included the MPO policy boards and VDOT construction districts. Many of the solutions identified by the planning process were recommendations from other planning documents or the VDOT Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions (STARS) program.

## **What didn't work so well?**

With any project that involves multiple stakeholders and interested parties there are things that don't always go as well as planned. For the corridor planning project these included maintaining interest from working group members whose participation decreased over the 6 meetings. The project also suffered initially from the lack of a clear purpose.

## **Process recommendations?**

For future corridor projects the project team recommends investing more time and effort in conducting outreach to local governments. As the project progressed some local governments found it hard to see the benefits of the planning process. Especially, since the current condition of the corridor is not having a large negative impact on all the communities. Additional recommendations include; shortening the length of working group meetings and scheduling them more often, and providing working group members with clear guidance on roles and responsibilities.